

Alma's Public Schools Are Noteworthy

Public School System Ranks High Among
the Schools of the State of Michigan

ONE of the things of which Alma can be most proud is her system of public schools, which is educating the city's young to take their place in life's battles with its pitfalls, mudholes, and mires, into which sink the unfortunates, unable to hold up their heads in the mad race for success in life.

As has been the case with all other well known institutions of note the Alma public schools had their beginning in a small way, and gradually grew with the city, to assume the important place that they now hold in the life of the city.

The Union school as the old high school

physical perfection as may be possible, that better manhood and womanhood may be had as a portion of their education.

Far more important than this, however, it is equipped with a commercial department for which a need had been felt for years prior to its establishment, and students in the high school are now able to get a thorough business education if they so desire and apply their time and talents in the right directions. Bookkeeping and typewriting are the principal course taught in this department.

A domestic science course is also offered in the new high school, this being to the girls what the manual training department of the



Union School Building

is known, was built back in the eighties, to replace the old wooden school house, which was burned. It was used for all twelve grades for years, but soon after 1905, it became necessary to build the ward school on Gratiot avenue. The growth of the public schools continued and in 1911, it was found that the high school had outgrown its quarters in this building and that a high school building was needed in this city.

The voters of the district passed upon the proposition to construct a high school building costing \$65,000.00, and it was carried

high school is to the boys. Both are extremely valuable in the making of a general education, and in making the boy and girl handy, when it comes to doing things.

Of late the Alma public schools have been increasing with the greatest rapidity in attendance, this year being the banner year in the history of the schools in this respect. The growth has been so great that there has been a large overflow, so that in the primary building rooms in the basement were fitted up for school rooms, and an overflow which still remained had to be taken



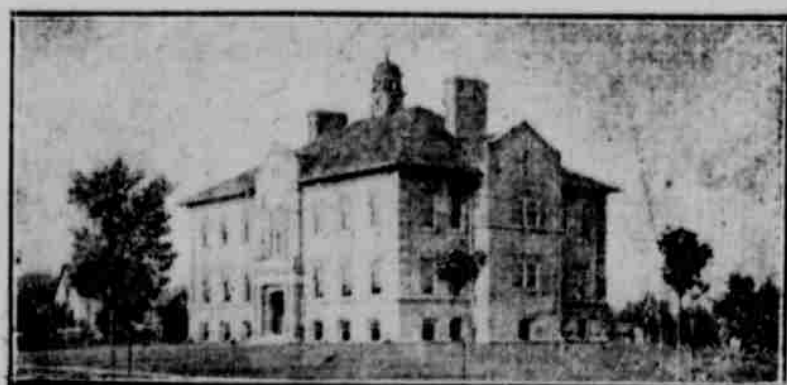
Alma's \$65,000 High School

early in 1912, and the construction of the new building was started. It was completed so that in the early months of 1913 it became available for use, and at that time was rated as one of the most modern high schools in the state.

It is equipped with a splendid gymnasium for the training of the boys and girls of the schools, that they may obtain to as near

care of in the assembly room in the city hall. In addition to this it became necessary to have half day sessions in some rooms in the Union school building.

This meant that action was needed quickly in providing a new ward school, and two weeks ago the voters of the school district voted to bond for \$45,000 for such a building to be constructed on the Elmwood school site,



Alma Primary Building

MUNICIPALITY IMPROVEMENTS

Many Important Changes are
Being Made at Present
Time in City.

COST IS WELL

OVER \$125,000.00

Alma Planning for the Larger City
Which Past Growth Makes
Certain.

Municipal improvements are coming rapidly in the city of Alma, which because of its growth, has outgrown its former system of water mains, sewers and streets, because of the demands which have been made upon one and all of them.

It seems but only a day since Alma was a quiet little country village, with its wooden water mains, its sewers down just a few of the more principal streets of the village, and which did not know what paved streets were.

How different today, when the city is stretching forth on every hand, and the council and mayor of the city are forced to extend themselves to find ways and means of meeting the great demands which are coming for water mains, sewers, for paving and for street lights, when changes come, seemingly almost over night.

When Alma started on her rapid growth five years ago, she had few short blocks of paving on the main street of the city. With her growth the demand for paved streets grew, and paving was extended north and south on Superior and Michigan, south on State street, east on Superior street and Michigan avenue to the Republic Motor Truck plant, and was also extended north on Wright avenue for a block.

Last year more paving was laid, jobs which were held up by winter are being completed this spring. Michigan avenue has been paved far east of the Republic plant, Bridge avenue has been paved, and now West Superior is being paved west to the college hill, and East Superior street is being paved east from Grover avenue to plant three of the Republic.

More paving is bound to come. The heavy demands upon the streets of Alma make this a foregone conclusion. Several streets are now in need of paving and it cannot be more than a matter of a few months before more municipal progressiveness in this respect will be shown.

The heavy bond issue of last year provided money with which to extend sewers to all parts of the city, at a cost of nearly fifty thousand dollars. The increased growth of the past year, the opening of new streets, new subdivisions and the construction of new houses, importations where sewers had not been planned, still makes the sewer system short of the ideal. This is one of Alma's never-ending municipal improving problems. Sanitation is its governing rule, and the city heads are abiding closely by it, in supplying sewers where they are needed.

Alma's water system is as good as the average for a city of its size, but still Alma strives for something better, and indications are that Alma will continue to strive until she gives to her people the very best water which can be obtained, water that is pure and wholesome, and in good quantity. She plans to do this by the sinking of large wells, and pumping the water. As a further means of giving Alma a complete water system the water-mains of the city are being extended to all sections within the corporate limits, where it is felt that there is a need of water. The water is now present drawn from Pine river, by use of the pumping station of the Alma Grain & Lumber company, which is being operated by the city, through a lease executed a few months ago. There is but little question, but what, sooner or later, Alma will own her pumping station.

Alma boasts of a fine system of boulevard lights, which extend from the railroad on the west on Superior street, east to the river, and north from the railroads on State street to Downey street. Large carbon arcs furnish the light in other sections of Alma.

Alma has a city hall, which a few years ago, was considered a most splendid one for the city, but the growth of Alma, has been such that the municipal building of the city is rapidly becoming too small for the demands which are made upon it, and

(Continued on page three)

Rapid Growth Marks Alma as Wonder City

New Lease of Life Taken on Five Years Ago Has Sent Alma
to Top of Michigan's Rapidly Growing Communities



City Hall

ALMA, known the country over as the new Wonder City of Michigan, lies on both the Pere Marquette and Ann Arbor railroads, being on the Grand Rapids-Saginaw division of the P. M., and just half way between Toledo and Frankfort, the terminals of the Ann Arbor. It is located almost geographically in the "Heart of Michigan."

Alma was founded in the early 50's, and for years was nothing more than a mere struggle hamlet, its growth and life seemingly depending upon the timbered lands of this section of the state. As the timber lands were cleared and Gratiot was found to have good farming land, Alma seemed destined to become a simple backwoods farming community, such as are thousands of small towns throughout the country.

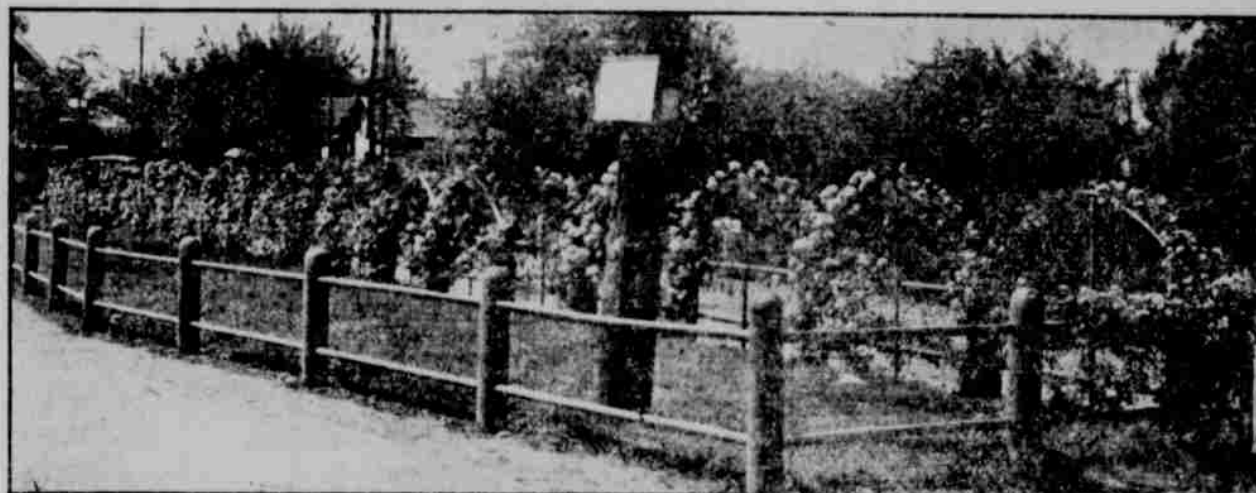
Such was the town of Alma when, in the 80's, a well-known man, the late Ammi W. Wright, moved to this city and the first boom that Alma ever enjoyed began, but it was a

public Motor Truck Company Incorporated.

With the death of her late benefactor, Alma stopped. She could not accustom herself to traveling alone, it seemed. Her life-blood seemingly had been sapped, and Alma stopped, in fact declined, during the two or three years that preceded his death and for two years following.

Then came the awakening. The 1910 census indicated that Alma had only 2757 people within her corporate limits. Today 7,500 probably is a mild estimate, with the greater portion of this increase having come within the past four years, when Alma has been forging to the front, making for herself the name, "The New Wonder City of Michigan."

Without question the growth of Alma has been due, almost entirely, to the phenomenal growth which has been enjoyed by her greatest industry, the Republic Motor Truck Company Incorporated, the home of Republic trucks, which in five short years has grown



Pretty Summer Scene at the Depot

quiet one, quiet like the man who started it, and it was spread over a number of years.

Very soon after coming to Alma a college was started by him, a normal school in truth, which later became the Alma college of today; a hotel was constructed and at that time it was the finest hotel that any small town in Michigan could boast. It was followed by a sanitarium of generous proportions, which was complete in every detail, and along about the same time a large business block came into being as the result of his labors.

Alma for some years lived with and based her proud hopes for the future upon the late benefactor of this city, and her hopes began to be realized when he started a sugar factory, the present Alma plant of the Michigan Sugar company, and demonstrated at the same time that sugar beets could be successfully grown in Michigan. In this respect he did much for the state of his adoption, as Michigan is now one of the great beet sugar producing states of the Union. He started a produce company which has grown rapidly, and today is the Alma plant of Swift & company, which does an annual business that runs into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. To this was added the Alma Manufacturing company, which made at one time the well-known McVicker gasoline engine and which finally gave way to the truck company.

Aged and infirm during the past two or three years of his life, he saw a few of his monuments of manufacturing and health-giving, start to crumble.

His philanthropy, in one respect, saved one of these monuments and made it a still greater monument to the benefactor of Alma. Just a few months before his death he gave to the Masons of Michigan the Alma Sanitarium to be used by them as the Michigan state Masonic home.

The monument of industry made by him, the plant of the old Alma Manufacturing company, withered, almost died, then blossomed forth into the greatest truck factory that the world contains, the plant of the Re-

public Motor Truck Company, using a portion of the old Alma Manufacturing company's plant, into the world's largest exclusive truck factory, with nearly two thousand men on its pay roll. In July, 1913, this company was organized with only a few thousand dollars capital, and employing about thirty-five men. A change wrought so suddenly that it would seem that Aladdin had rubbed his magic lamp.

Libby, McNeil & Libby.

Another industry of which Alma takes pride is the Michigan branch of Libby, McNeil & Libby, which was established here four years ago. This plant has enjoyed a fine business and last year doubled its capacity, and now has six large buildings and a complete power house. It employs over two hundred people during the busy season of the year and does the processes and pickling for the numerous salting stations which this company has throughout the state.

A little over a year ago the state offices of Libby, McNeil & Libby were moved to Alma from Stanton, and occupy a portion of one of the large buildings at the plant.

The Alma plant of the Michigan Sugar company, employing about five hundred men (Continued on page three)



First House Erected in Alma